

Bruised

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Bruised / A Major Crimes Fic

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The first thing she hears when she wakes up is the sound of feet shuffling in the distance. She tries to lift her head off the floor but finds it feels like cement. She wants to cry out but she's afraid he's come back to finish what he started. Her brand new white dress with blues and greens in the pattern is covered in blood, she knows that, can smell the metal and feel it stick to her skin. If it's hers she cannot tell, she can't feel anything and she doesn't know if that's a good thing. She hears a man's voice in the distance as he enters the room; it's foreign to her, a New York accent maybe? Definitely not him and she tries to breathe a sigh of relief but in her comatose like state it's nearly impossible. His voice becomes clearer as he steps closer to her. "I need a medic in here now!" Medic. That's a good sign, "I'm not dead, yet," she cynically thinks to herself. "Sweetheart?" She manages to look up to see the man standing over her, the one with a New York accent; he has grey hair, a quite handsome face really and is sporting a suit. A cop? She looks for a badge but she's so tired and her whole body hurts. She tries to say something in return but all that comes out is a hoarse gasp of air. "Sweetheart, help is on the way, ok?" He's stroking her hair and the last thing that her through your mind before the world goes black is "where's my niece?"

**** _three hours prior _ ****

Sharon stretched languidly against the sheets that glowed against the sunlight streaming through the window. She smiled as she felt Andy's arm tighten around her. She felt him press kisses against the back of her head, neck and bare shoulder and she snuggled back into him. "Good morning," she sighed, her voice huskier than usual, laden with sleep. Andy move his lips to the special spot that drove her crazy between her collarbone and ear and planted more kisses there. "Good morning," his voice equally deep and husky. Sharon turned around so she was facing Andy and ran her hands against the stubble on his jaw and chin then drew him in for a kiss. She snuggled back down against his bare chest and sighed happily. "What a glorious start to the weekend. Rusty's gone away with Gus, we only have to work half a day and then you and me are going to spend tonight, tomorrow and Sunday locked away in that little bungalow on the beach." Andy grinned at her excitement. They could never find time to actually get away between the hectic schedule at the precinct and making time for their kids when they were in town it was going to be nice to enjoy each other's company, alone, in a bungalow in Santa Monica. "I am all for starting the weekend early," Andy said, nuzzling his stubble against her neck in the process. Sharon shrieked in delight. "Andy, that tickles! Silly man. I would have thought after last night you'd be satiated." Andy rolled on top of her and placed a few, quick kisses on her lips. He was about to offer a retort when his phone began to ring. He rolled his eyes and climbed off of her to reach over and retrieve his phone from the nightstand. "Looks like our early celebration will be cut short this morning, home invasion shooting in Silver Lake." Sharon watched as Andy picked his clothes that had been haphazardly strewn across their room last night and place them in the hamper before moving into the bathroom. She heard him turn the shower on and quickly threw back the covers to follow him; they still had time for a little celebration before the weekend.

****_present_****

Sharon walked into the squad room, feeling rather refreshed, coffee in hand ready to take on the case head on. "Julio, what do we know so far?"

"I talked to the president of the Neighborhood Watch, Terry Godwin, she said two shots were heard around 8:30 this morning, ma'am. Neighbors did get a glimpse at the car, dark grey, four-door sedan, possibly a Nissan, partial plate Zulu Tango Foxtrot and the number five. They said they only saw one man, skinny, about six feet, white, dark hair. We already have an APB out on the car."

Provenza chuckled. "I love neighborhood watch, they make our jobs so much easier."

"Captain, the house belongs to a Gemma Marie Clarke, twenty four."

Sharon cocks her head while she looks at Gemma's picture on the white board. "Julio, That's a pretty big house for a twenty four year old to own, in this part of LA, no?"

Julio swiveled around in his chair so everyone could hear him. "Her parents died two years ago after they were hit by a drunk driver who ran through a red light. It looks like someone else lives there, a child maybe, there were pictures around the house and child's bedroom but no sign of the child."

Just then Sharon feels her phone buzz and sees that it's Andy.
"Excuse me for just one moment."

Sykes got up from her desk and jotted something on the board. "We're looking for anything that might tell us who she is or where she is before we call the cavalry in."

"Alright, Andy just updated me: Gemma is still unconscious. She has a minor concussion, three cracked ribs, a broken wrist, a gunshot wound that went through her shoulder and another bullet grazed her temple. Her doctor says she'll make a full recovery however it will take some time for her to heal. Lieutenant Tau, have we gotten results back if the blood on Gemma's dress is hers or not?"

"The blood is on the dress is in fact Gemma's but they're still having trouble isolating the DNA, like someone else's blood is on it, we just have to wait for conclusive results to be sure."

Sharon nodded. "Keep on it. Sykes, have you been able to get any information on the identity of that little girl?"

"Uh, yes ma'am, I did a little more digging and found that Gemma became her six-year-old niece's guardian when her parents died. Her name is Gracie Lou Clarke, she's enrolled in a small preschool near their house and even though school's out for the summer this particular daycare has hour-to-hour appointments, giving parents time to run errands, workout, what have you. I called to see if Gracie was on the schedule for today and turns out she was supposed to be there this morning but they haven't seen her."

Panic started sink deep into Sharon's stomach. "Provenza, I want a statewide amber alert and talk to Taylor, tell him I'm going to see if Andy can get into Gemma's phone so we can get Gracie's photo out for press, we don't have time to go back to the house."

****_hospital_****

This time when she wakes up she squints her eyes against the bright light of the hospital room. "Goddamn, that's bright," she thinks to herself. She tries to move her arm to shield her eyes til they adjust but finds that it hurts to move her arm, in fact, her whole body hurts. She looks over to her left and sees the grey haired man from the house sitting by her bed, reading the paper. He looks up at her when she makes a moaning sound and quickly presses the red button on the side of the bed.

"Welcome back, sweetheart." His voice is much clearer now and yes, that's definitely a New York accent. She offers him a pitiful, half smile for her face is swollen and bruised.

"Well, miss, you gave detectives and doctors alike quite a scare! Do you know who you are?" Gemma nodded her head as the nurse gave her a cup of ice water she readily accepted and downed. "Do you know where you are?" Gemma nodded again. "Gemma, in addition to the minor concussion from hitting your head and bullet that grazed your temple, you have a compound fracture to your right wrist, three cracked ribs, a gunshot wound that went through your shoulder, clean, no major damage and other various parts of your body, including your arms and legs, are badly bruised. Do you understand what I'm saying?" She

nodded at the doctor. "Yes." Her voice was hoarse. "Can I get some ice chips please?" The doctor smiled. "Of course." The doctor then turns to the grey haired man, "Lieutenant Flynn, she is all yours."

"Doc's right, you did give me quite a scare and I have high blood pressure." She doesn't know why but she feels comfortable around this Flynn character and cracks a smile on his behalf. "Don't quit your day job." This time Flynn chuckles. "Gemma, as the doctor said I'm Lieutenant Flynn, but you can call me Andy. Do you remember what happened?" "I only remember snippets, like movie clips, they come and go."

Flynn nods his head as he writes the information down. "Is that your house you were attacked in?" Gemma nods her head. "My parents died two years ago, I inherited it. My niece, Gracie, is she ok? She was at the house with me when it happened?"

Flynn looked up at her, the pain evident in his eyes; he hated this part of the job. "Gemma, I'm afraid Gracie wasn't at the house when we got there. At this point, we're under the assumption that whomever attacked you took her."

Gemma stares at the cup in front of her without really seeing it. "She's gonna turn up dead isn't she?"

"We don't know that."

"You look like you've been on the force for a while, you've worked enough cases to see how badly this can go so tell me, Lieutenant, what are the odds of her turning up alive?"

Flynn sighs. "There's a twenty four hour window after that we start to assume the worst unless evidence proves otherwise."

"Thought so."

"We are doing everything we can to find her, I managed to use your thumbprint to get into your phone to get a picture of Gracie out to the press but honestly, we've been limited, we need more information from you. Do you have any idea who would want to hurt you and Gracie?"

Gemma looked like she was about to cry and according to the vitals monitor by her bedside her heart rate had gone up exponentially.

"Sweetheart, look at me." Flynn took Gemma's arms and rubbed them slowly. "Gemma, hey, there we go. Breathe slowly with me, ok? There we go, that's it, that's a good girl." Gemma tried to follow his deep breathing patterns but it was proving to be difficult so she concentrated on his hands trying to soothe her. After Gemma used a few quiet moments to collect herself and her thoughts she began to speak.

"Lieutenant, whose blood was all over my dress?" Gemma's voice sounded foreign to her, it was distant and once again hoarse.

"Well, some of it was yours, that we know but we're trying to figure out the other source."

"Oh, God, was it Gracie's?"

Flynn sat on the edge of her hospital bed. "I can't tell you because I don't know, for all we know it could be your attacker's."

"What if my baby girl is hurt? Oh, God, she needs help!"

"And we're going to help her, I promise you we will find her."

"What's the point in finding her if she's dead! I need her to be alive!"

Flynn suddenly had a thought. "Do you know her blood type?"

Thrown off by the question Gemma's internal parental instincts kicked in. "Yeah, it's B, why?"

Flynn takes out his phone again and calls his Captain. "Sharon, yeah, have Morales run a familial type on the blood found on Gemma's dress. Yes and Gracie Clarke's blood type is B so keep that in mind whenever the results come back. Great, thanks. I'll be back as soon as I can. Ok, bye."

Gemma rolled her eyes and let out a frustrated huff. "If I'm such a burden to your case, why don't you just leave?" She was scared, tired and sore and she felt defenseless sitting in the hospital bed. She could be out looking for Gracie.

"I'm not leaving you alone, Gemma. Someone attacked you today, tried to kill you and almost succeeded, you need protection. Talk to me some more, the more I know about you, the more it could help find the people who did this to you, who took Gracie."

A single tear rolled down Gemma's cheek and she uncrossed her arms. "On one condition." Andy looked at her skeptically but he had to admit, the girl was good. "I want out of here and before you fight me on this, yes, I hurt like hell all over but that's nothing a good pain pill, a shower and some coffee won't fix."

Flynn smiled "well, I could argue that you're the prime witness to an on-going LAPD investigation and we need to move you to a safe location."

Gemma smiled. "I think I'm starting to like you, Flynn. But what about my clothes, I know they're evidence."

"I'll make sure the hospital will loan you a pair of scrubs then I'll take you back to my place, I have sweats you can wear."

Gemma nodded her head. "K, let's go."

"Nuh uh, sit in that bed young lady, you are not ripping out your IV, you will wait til the nurse comes in to do it. I'm gonna go find your doctor and start working on the discharge paperwork."

An hour later and a half later, with Sharon's official approval, Gemma was sitting comfortably on the couch in Sharon and Andy's house, wearing a pair of Andy's sweatpants and a Dodger's t-shirt.

Gemma's long, dark hair was wet from her shower and she had a fresh mug of coffee in hand. Andy came to sit down with Gemma and handed her a pill, bottle of water and stack of pancakes. "Doc said for you to take this when you had something on your stomach. I know its just Bisquick but I think it'll do the trick." Gemma smiled. "Thank you, Andy." She dove into the pancakes not realizing how hungry she actually was.

"You know I'm gonna have to ask you the tough questions now, right?" Gemma nodded as she took a sip of water. They hadn't talked much in the car after she was discharged. She almost wished he had asked her the tough questions in the car, to get them over with when she couldn't escape but now here she was, in his house, looking for anyway to avoid the inevitable.

"Tell me about your brother."

Well, that's a hell of a way to start an inquiry. "Not much to tell, I was the brat sister growing up, he always resented my parents for having me. He started getting into trouble when he was sixteen, stupid shit, B and E's, mostly but then when he turned 18 he started hanging around the Aryan Brotherhood and he disappeared. He turned up again six years ago when he got busted for distribution with Gracie in toe, my parents got custody of her but when they died two years ago then I became her guardian."

"You're what, twenty?"

"Twenty four," she corrected.

"You're twenty four and yet you're willingly taking on the task of raising a child, with no help, no degree, while dealing with all that's happened?"

"She's the only family I have, Andy, I promised my parents that if anything happened to them I would make sure she had the life that she deserves. My brother certainly could never give her that."

"Do you know where your brother is now?"

"God, I haven't seen him since he signed Gracie over to my parents. He used to have a shit hole down on the outskirts of West Hollywood but I don't really remember where it is or the address, like I said, I was only his brat sister. My parents were always going over there to give him money, food, whatever he needed. I guess they saw something in him but that last time he got arrested they made sure they got custody of Gracie and they stopped bailing him out. Last I heard he served his five year sentence and is out but like I said I don't know where he is and he certainly hasn't tried contacting me." Andy paused and took a sip of tea he had made. "I had Sharon run a background on you. Around the same time your parents adopted Gracie you went off to college for a little bit. Turns out you were a killer softball player in high school, got you to USC on scholarship but then you dropped out after two years-" "Andy, please don't go there."

Gemma abruptly gets up from the couch and starts to putz around in the kitchen. "Gemma, I called the school and they still had the file. I know campus cops did a shit job." Gemma wrings the towel in her hands and throws it onto the counter. "That was over three years ago,

nothing will change what happened. Why does it matter, Andy? What does any of this have to do with finding Gracie?" Angry tears spilled over Gemma's big green eyes.

"You wanna know what my gut is telling me? Whoever attacked you at USC attacked you in your home. They came to finish the job that they started but instead of killing you they left you for dead and took Gracie because they knew she is the only thing you have left in this world. Someone you knew did this to you and I'm sitting here trying to figure out what you're not telling me and why. Because I know you know something, Gemma, am I crazy or do you know something?"

Gemma cupped her hands over her mouth and burst into tears, rushing into Andy's arms, which he opened without a second thought. Andy rubbed her back as she continued to sob into his chest. "You know who did this to you, don't you?" Gemma shook her head. "Not really, like I said before, I only remember bits n' pieces, like movie clips, from this morning and that night at my dorm. I can see his face but it's distorted, foggy like I'm looking through dirty glass."

Andy guided Gemma back to the couch. "Come on, let's go sit back down. Tell me what you do know, smells, sounds, anything you think of." Gemma nodded and wiped at the tears that steadily fell down her face. She drew in a ragged breath before she continued. "I know that he smells, outdoorsy but stale, sweaty even. He has a sleeve of tattoos on his arms but I don't remember what they were. If you're right about this being the same person he attacked me from behind, both times, and came in through a window, not a door. The last thing I remember is standing in the kitchen, I was chopping up ham for omelets, Gracie loves omelets for breakfast."

Just then Sharon came through the front door of the condo with a large folder and a grocery bag. "Oh, Sharon, I thought you were going to be coming by later."

"I just wanted to check in with you and our guest, make sure everything was ok, bring some goodies and give some updates."

Gemma's ears perked up at the word 'updates' and she watched as Sharon moved throughout the house quickly putting things away before taking a seat on the coffeetable in front of the couch. "Gemma, my name is Captain Sharon Raydor, I'm head of the Major Crimes division at the LAPD and our team is the one investigating your case."

"And you live here with Andy?"

Sharon offered Gemma a warm smile. "I do, yes."

Gemma nodded and let Sharon continue. "I hope I didn't interrupt anything."

Gemma shook it off and brushed away her tears. "Andy's been uh trying to get some more information about my background, try to piece together everything."

"Andy's good like that."

Gemma smiled. "Yeah, he is, I see why you uh like him."

"I have some pictures, sketches actually, that some of your neighbors gave to the sketch artist and I just want you to look them over and see if this man seems familiar to you." Gemma nodded as Sharon handed her three composites, some more detailed than others. She closed her eyes and tried her best to see his face, to place him, she felt like she might know him but wasn't too sure. She still couldn't remember more than a blurred face from the attack. She felt herself becoming distressed and Andy could tell in the stiffness of her features.

"Gemma, it's ok, breathe."

"I want to be able to tell you that this is the guy, for you to go hunt him down and lock him up forever but I don't know, I still can't piece together the blurry face from this morning." Sharon placed a hand on her shoulder. "Just because you don't recognize him doesn't mean we aren't going after him, because we are, we're running down his face through the DMV database. Three of your neighbors saw this man, sweetheart, he will be caught." Gemma nodded tearfully. "Were there any other updates you could give me?" Sharon knew by the look Andy was giving her that she was treating this case differently, she'd never given away information so freely before but then again he'd never let a witness stay at his- their house before either. She sensed a bond between the victim and her boyfriend and decided that it was best that Major Crimes had taken the case, despite the fact the case had gone from homicide to attempted murder and child abduction. Sharon felt the need emanating from Gemma, she needed Andy, she needed someone to hold on to while this was happening and she was glad Andy could be there for her since she knew he'd missed out on being there for his own children. Should she tell her that they found Gracie's blood on her dress, that they really didn't have any other leads? She decided against it but she would tell Andy privately, later.

"Going off on the information Andy has already passed on to me, the team is trying to track down your brother's last known address and we're also going to go pay him a visit. I promise you Gemma; I will make sure we find Gracie. Now, what were you and Andy discussing?"

Gracie crossed her arms and sank back down into the couch. "The night I was attacked outside my dorm when I was at USC. Andy thinks - Andy thinks the person who attacked me wanted to finish the job but left me for dead and took Gracie."

"And how do you feel about that, about Andy's theory?" Gemma let out a heavy sigh. "I don't really know, I guess, I mean, Andy's been doing this longer than I've been alive, so I trust him." Sharon put a hand on Gemma's arm. "Andy wouldn't make you go over that night if he didn't think it was important, trust that."

Gemma swallowed thickly. "I know, it's just, it's hard. I worked hard to put all of that behind me; every time I think I'm finally moving forward with my life, the attack, dropping out, my parents death I feel like life screws me over and moves me three steps back. I can't catch a fucking break. I just really want Gracie back, that's all that matters to me."

Sharon took Gemma's hand into her own and squeezed. "Gemma, look at me. I usually don't make promises to victims or their families but

I'm going to let you in on a little secret, you're different, this case is different and I made a promise to you and I intend to keep it." Gemma suddenly lunged forward and hugged Sharon. "Thank you, Sharon." Sharon, though momentarily stunned, quickly reciprocated and smiled at Andy as she replied "you're welcome, sweet girl."

End
file.